

a little push by aethelreds

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Summary:

Everyone knows that Joyce and Hopper are in love, except, apparently, for Joyce and Hopper. Karen decides to take matters into her own hands.

a little push

Author's Note:

- For [judypoovey](#).

Karen had never been happier. Ever since she'd lost that extra two hundred pounds she called Ted Wheeler, she'd been walking on sunshine. She got to keep the house and she was receiving a considerable amount of alimony, so between that and her part-time job working at the jewelry counter at the mall, she was still able to live a comfortable life with her children. Ted was supposed to have them a few days a month, but he always ended up being busy, with the end result that they never really saw him. No one seemed upset with this arrangement.

At the encouragement of all her girlfriends, Karen had decided to take advantage of her newly-achieved single status and start dating again. She didn't want to brag, but men were all *over* her, and it put a spring in her step. She was *sexy*. She was *desirable*. She couldn't remember the last time she'd felt like either of those things.

"You could get a date with *any* man in this town," Tara Sinclair told her. "And I mean *any* man."

"Hmm, I don't know about that," Karen said modestly, but they both knew she was just being coy. She *could* get a date with any man she wanted. Well, just about. "There's at least one man I probably couldn't seduce."

"Really? Who?" Tara asked with a raised eyebrow.

Karen drummed her nails against the tabletop. "Jim Hopper."

Tara made a noise of agreement. "A couple years ago, maybe, but not now that he and Joyce are so close."

"I know--I just wish one of them would make a move. It's so *obvious* they're head over heels for each other," Karen sighed.

"They just need a little push," Tara said.

A metaphorical lightbulb went off in both women's heads. They looked at each other with wicked grins.

"Are you thinking...?"

" *Oh* yeah."

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Karen, Tara, Joyce, and Claudia met up on Thursday night for their usual girls' night out at one of the only wine bars in Hawkins. They all talked about their weeks and what was going on in their lives--mostly with their kids, but the conversation inevitably turned to Karen's latest romantic exploits. She was, after all, the one with the most active sex life.

"Anyway," she said in her most nonchalant tone, "I think I'm going to make a move on Jim Hopper next."

Claudia's eyes widened. Joyce's hand tightened around the stem of her glass.

"Jim *Hopper*?" Claudia asked, glancing at Joyce.

"Yes," Karen said as if she hadn't noticed Joyce's face go pale. Well, pal *er* . "He's single, he has a nice body now that he's been dieting and working out, and I heard that he's an *animal* in bed."

"Oh my god, Karen," Claudia said, looking askance.

Karen shrugged. "What? I'm trying to make up for almost twenty years of dissatisfaction."

"Well, best of luck," Tara said, clinking her glass with Karen's. Turning her head so only Karen could see, she mouthed, "It's working!"

Karen winked at her, and tried not to feel too bad about the way Joyce's knuckles had gone white. It was for the best.

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Karen waited a couple days to see if Joyce had acted on the threat, but nothing appeared to have changed, so Karen decided to take things one step further.

Will and El were both hanging out in her basement with Mike the following evening, as she knew they would be. She wore her tightest pair of jeans and a button-up that she tied so that *just* enough skin was showing. When Joyce came to pick up Will, Karen invited her in for a drink.

"I, uh, actually wanted to talk to you," Joyce said, wringing her hands. "About what you said the other night."

"What do you mean?" Karen asked, feigning ignorance.

"About--"

But Joyce didn't get to finish, because there was a knocking on the door at that precise moment. Karen beamed at Joyce. "Excuse me." She sailed to the door and was thrilled when she found Jim Hopper behind it. He gave her a polite smile.

"Hi, Karen, I'm here for my daughter."

"Of course." She sensed Joyce in the hall and vamped against the doorframe. "Say, Hop, I was wondering--"

"Excuse me, Karen," Joyce said loudly, shoving past Karen. "I need to talk to Hop."

"Sure," Karen said, watching in amusement as Joyce grabbed a bemused Hopper's arm and dragged him out to the driveway. She closed the door to give them privacy and then went to the living room window, where she peered out of the blinds. She gasped--that hadn't taken long at *all*. Hopper had Joyce up against the side of his truck, her arms around his shoulders and her legs around his waist as he kissed her. It was actually pretty hot. She watched them for a few more minutes, and then they both climbed in Hopper's truck and disappeared into the night.

Karen heard the kids coming up the basement stairs and jumped away from the blinds.

“Oh,” Will said, looking around in confusion. “I thought I heard my mom.”

“She was here,” Karen said with a smile. “But she forgot something. She’ll be back.”

The kids shrugged and went back downstairs. Karen waited until she could hear them playing before she went to the phone.

“Tara? It worked.”